

Behind the Lines
by
George A. Fisher

1944

Behind the Lines

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by

George A. Fisher
Keeley, Utah

DEDICATED TO

My son

Wilson Fisher

with

U. S. FIELD ARTILLERY, AND HIS
MILLIONS OF BUDDIES EVERYWHERE

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Preface

When I was just a little chap, like other boys that age,
My idols ran from baseball to the star upon the stage;
I read about our Presidents and fine big things they did,
And pondered lives of great men but, just like any kid,
I thought I had some leanings which seemed to fall in line
With those who seek expression through the medium of rhyme.

So I wrote about the Spanish war, (I guess the stuff was crude,)
But the way the folks received it was nothing short of rude;
They said I never was cut out for sentimental verse,
One brother said: "Put him to work," another, something worse;
Though it seemed to damp my spirit, yet I stole across the wood
To ask dear old Aunt Mary and—she said that I could.

Ambition, often thwarted, nurses on a childish whim,
Which grows with age in reverence to the memory of Him
Who encourages endeavor, discounting faults that be,
Forbidding not, but suffering all, "To Come Unto Me,"
And there you have the preface to this humble bit of rhyme
Written in appreciation for the fighters in the line.

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A Prayer

Dear Father:

I hear so many people inquiring about You lately, I wonder sometimes if You are still there. I thought perhaps You might be grieved or worried over children who have lost the art of prayer. It couldn't be that You are on vacation, or might have struck for better hours or pay? Forgive this little chatter, won't You Father? I know that You have never been away.

I have some inking now of what You suffered with a cherished Son upon a cruel cross. Tell me how to face the world and all that's in it, and to help my neighbor bear his blighting loss.

Teach me Faith and Hope and Charity and Service, and that a dollar bill is not the goal. Make me worthy of the sacred name of father to that boy out there tonight in some foxhole.

Reverently and Sincerely,

YOUR LOVING SON.

America's If

IF you in civil life will pledge devotion
To colors floating proudly from that mast,
Where, blended with the glory of the morning,
The Stars and Stripes link present to the past;
IF you will tune your soul, the Nation's anthem,
Inspired by that banner through the night,
Will touch, within, the chord and scale of SERVICE,
Although you're miles away from where they fight.

IF you will bathe at dawn in Freedom's glory,
Then face your day, nor shirk it's irksome load,
And keep your chin forever tilted upward,
You'll back the marshaled columns on some road;
IF you will turn a lathe or plough a furrow
While cherished sons are marching off to fight,
Nor pause to challenge those who issue orders,
You'll help destroy the creed that Might is Right.

IF you will bow to Fate decreeing service
In factory or mart where products roll,
Remember, you can likewise have engraven
Your name with other heroes on the Scroll;
IF you'll discharge your task with hand and spirit
Directed toward results, not hours or pay,
You'll join the throng who reckon not with either,
As they fill their niche defending U. S. A.

IF you will weave your fabric and be mindful
That shoddy thread won't dye Red, White and Blue,
You'll aid beyond all ken the gallant legions
Who risk their all to see that we pull through;
IF YOU and I will regiment our forces,
Forgetting self, and all it doth betide,
The U. S. A., designed as Freedom's cradle,
Will hold aloft the torch for which He died.

A Mother's Dream

She dreamed of soldiers crossing the ice on the Delaware,
Of mothers' sons in Flanders and the poppies over there;
Surging lines of Blue and Gray brought crosses white to loom
Beside a shrine at Arlington—the Unknown Soldier's tomb;
She saw nearby a nameless shaft where twenty hundred dead
Sleep in a single grave beneath the Stars and Stripes o'erhead;
Her vision marshaled countless grunes with crosses row on row,
Which made her ponder if the fight was worth while here below;
The voice of martyred Presidents rose above the battle strife,
To lead her son up to the throne of everlasting life;
His vacant chair bespoke the cost of Calvary's bitter loss
To another sainted mother, and another sainted cross.

U.S. Means Us

What can we do, men daily say,
To keep on living in our own way?
From palace gates to haunts of poor
This question pounds at every door.

The answer, etched in tears and blood
From Jap-held lands to Europe's mud,
Is nursed by suffering men who dare,
Trusting in us to do our share.

Maybe our share is buying a bond,
Or saving an old tin can;
Maybe it's pledging we won't strike,
And letting the army plan.

Maybe the boys are thinking:
"We take orders, do you?
Our union doesn't pay overtime,
How does yours get through?"

Maybe they'd like to tell us
There is no glamour in war;
Maybe they wonder between the shells
Just who they are fighting for.

Maybe the night wind breezes
Waft warning over the sea
That faith, if lacking work, is dead;
Are they pleading with you—or me?

A Budding Poet

A hillbilly sat on the cabin floor
'Neath the candle's flickering light,
Making some marks on paper,
"Look, Ma, I've leanned to write,"
"Well sure enough," his wife opined,
"And what is that you've writ?"
"Dunno, Ma, aint leanned to read it yit."

Even as You and I

They twitted him about the fact he had once been confined
In a hospital where doctors deal only with the mind;
Throughout the years he stood their jeers, until one day
He said: "You chaps, ere long, will pass along
The word old Jim is dead."
I haven't much to leave you, they took it for my keep,
But a priceless piece of paper I bequeath you when I sleep,
You'll find it in my bureau drawer tucked 'neath the papers deep;
It is signed by five good doctors attesting I am sane;
I wonder as I view the world if I have slipped again,
Or have I something few can show to leave behind their name?

America

I saw my neighbor standing as twilight shadows blend,
With his soldier son whose furlough was fading to an end;
I sensed what they were thinking against the crimson sky
And their laughter only echoed that tomorrow meant good-bye.

It was plain their minds were running to a distant battle line,
And tomorrow's bus arriving so cruelly on time;
I knew their Christian training taught them trouble to abhor,
But I felt their understanding as Dads' boy marched off to war.

Bonds or Bondage

I am Nathan Hale who faced the test in upstate New York dawn,
Under furlough from the C. O. bidding you to carry on;

I am Abram Lincoln, once your chief, returning through the mist,
To bring you faith we hold up there, yours is the land God kissed;

I'm Lieut. Col. John McRae, where Flander's poppies bloom;
I'm the mother of the soldier in the unknown Soldier's tomb;

I'm the mother Lincoln wrote to about five cherished sons
Who perished in the valley where the Rappahannock runs;

I'm the kid whose mother just received his medals with acclaim,
Yes, the kid who sold you papers where Broadway crosses Main;

I'm Nurse Cavell saluting the world of womankind,
Who hold aloft with splendor the torch I left behind;

I am G I Joe who slugged it out on the rugged road to Rome,
And paid the price they're asking for a land worth calling home;

I'm the one who's listed missing—the sailor or marine,
Who taught the Jap before he left, their will is not supreme;

I'm the pilot of the bomber who radioed out there
He was hoping he could bring 'er in upon a wing and prayer;

I'm shades of martyred millions from Valley Forge to France
Whose suffering was crowned with hope the world might thus
advance;

I'm the essence of the ages, massed behind your boy tonight,
If you knew your bond could help him, would you hesitate to fight?

No Help, Please

"Water, water, everywhere, but not a drop to drink—
An age old adage of the sea, true now as then, I think
When applied to gallant seamen who sail the mighty deep,
Or fearless army boys who bounce o'er deserts in a jeep.

These boys are coming home some day with varied tastes to quench,
Intensified by memories of battleship and trench;
In fancy I can hear them, as they touch the old home port:
"So, you've dried the country up again? Well, where's that 'hidden
quart'?"

Freedom

While men fight and die for their country,
It must make them feel they've been kicked
To learn homefolk are acting the role
Hitler planned when he said we were licked.

He counted on Quislings in Norway,
And some rotten timber in France,
He thought both the Yanks and the British
Would Waterloo on with the dance.

He figured America's freedoms
Were all that he needed to win;
So having helped us find our weakness,
He deserves a good poke on the chin.

His henchmen we house should be given
A chance at the "freedom" they spout;
A sixty pound pack and a rifle
Might teach them what freedom's about.

They could think it all out in a foxhole
With Huns splitting brackets above,
As they mingle prayer with soap box dreams
When they "fought" for the country they love.

This cap fitting well on evaders,
Is snug on that guy with his lore
Who mumbles about the four freedoms
While savages pound at our door.

The boy in the line who is fighting,
Is fully aware of this kind,
And pegs him with Benedict Arnold
Who carried his honor behind.

Don't

Don't condemn your brother harshly for a mote within his eye;
Don't conclude good has no lodgment in throngs that passes by;
Don't assume that every traveler has a bludgeon 'neath his coat,
Don't forget your son is traveling in a cause He underwrote;
Keep in mind that boy is fighting, and he needs your every prayer,
So tune your thought and action to his orders over there.

Don't, therefore, attempt to alter all that seems to you a flaw,
Don't discount age old conclusion that there is a higher law,
Don't think you have appointment to condemn the works of man,
Don't criticize unless you know you have a better plan;
Your son knows of commandments whose risk has taught him when,
The scroll unfolds we will be judged upon the chiseled Ten.

Dawn to Dusk

Above the sleeping city marts two messengers arose
To blaze a trail across a land nobody really knows;
Drowsy millions 'neath the dome of old New York skyline,
Pondered possibly the meaning of a lonely motor's whine.

Dawn's grey had ushered in, the dream of Russell Maughan
To span this continent by day, and thus the world moves on;
Steel lunged the motor answered to the grueling test ahead,
Steel nerved the pilot fixed his gaze out where the sun turns red.

Across the fertile valleys where the Mississippi flows,
The daring pilot urged his plane toward the Rockies' snows;
A lowering sun sent shadows from Nevada's mountain peaks,
A tired man and battered plane looked down upon its creeks.

The goal of San Francisco was five hundred miles away,
Yet sunset on the Golden Gate had scarcely crossed the bay,
When another Utah pioneer had written in the sky
A message that has helped a lot to lead men on who fly.

And though they're making better time, it dims the record none
Of the man who told his army chief he knew it could be done;
This epoch flight from dawn to dusk by Colonel Russell Maughan
Is proof that faith and fortitude can change the Dusk to DAWN.

Teach Me, Oh Lord, to Pray

When worldly troubles are lightest,
And skies are the brightest blue,
Madly we strive for the pleasures,
Blindly we follow them through.
But when the dark clouds gather
To herald a troublesome day,
Meekly we turn to the Master—
"Teach me, Oh Lord, to pray."

I know that my sins are countless,
That I've broken many a rule,
But, Master, Teacher, forgive me—
Let me go back to school.
Let me go back to my classes,
I promise no more to stray,
And I'll work hard for my credits—
"Teach me, Oh Lord, to pray."

The Teacher grants our pleading,
And welcomes us back in line,
Then smiles with a Father's pity
As we ask again for a sign.
He doesn't resent the doubting
Which carries our strength away,
As our first plea fades to an echo—
"Teach me, Oh Lord, to pray."

He knows that sooner or later
We'll gather the strength we lack,
And perhaps be better students
The next time we come back,
Then writes in His class roll ledger:
"Absent since yesterday,"
As He answers the plea from another—
"Teach me, Oh Lord, to pray."

Red, White and Blue

As twilight softly deepens, lad, and our day's work is done,
Let's offer thanks, then lift our eyes toward the setting sun;
The sky seems 'bout to burst in flame from gorgeous tints of red,
While soft white clouds go winging by to merge just overhead,
Blending in that sea of azure, and heralding anew
The promise there is meaning in the Red, the White, the Blue.

These colors are the flag which leads your brothers Tom and Jim,
Whose shelter is a foxhole roofed in by stars near Him;
With pillared hope that flag shall stay an ordained creed for man,
They fight on and on with confidence that you and I will plan
To keep this old farm running. Though young Bill, you can see
We must keep faith with Tom and Jim who fight to keep us free.

Judge Not

Had Patton's pat fell on my neck,
I think I'd grab a phone, by heck,
And say to him:; "Hi George, old chum,
You're sorry? So am I, by gum;
The folks at home back us to win;
My neck don't hurt—how is your chin?
Let's prove a little family scrap
Must not disturb a world-wide map
Which both of us have helped to mold;
Shake, old man—the teachin's old!"

Heart to Heart

Dear Son:

When you were home, son, Dad was like most fathers
Who cherish thoughts but leave them unexpressed,
For fear someone might think him sentimental
If he gave vent to feelings long repressed.
Or, perchance, he felt that you might count it dotage
Were he to thaw and let the sun shine through;
No matter, son—your lead breaks down tradition
With lines you penned from out there on the blue.
Any sacrifice I've made for you is canceled—
You will never know how glad you made me, lad,
By those chummy lines which cut the miles between us
And makes me proud to have you call me Dad.

A Poem to Dad

Tributes go to Mother, monuments builded for son,
In a world where Dad is simply called a hard-boiled son of a gun;
A well intentioned writer started once to pen acclaim,
But it ended in disaster with the old man drunk again.

"Father, dear," it started, and then it told the time
Which was two o'clock according to the village steeple's chime;
He'd been away for hours, but to hear the family wail
You'd think that he'd been missing for months in some damp jail.

Every ill that flesh is heir to had descended on their head,
So big brothers sent their sister down the path their Dad had tread,
Thinking she could make him understand 'twould soon be time
for work,
And Dad left his foaming goblet to trudge back without a quirk.

He lost his place upon the rail of Grady's polished bar,
But scratched his name upon the scroll of Fathers near and far,
Who kick the dew from off the grass while all the others sleep—
God bless you, Dad; in spite of faults, we love you for our keep.

Red Cross

Who is it that's winning the battles,
Is it we in our downy bed,
Or that boy in a rain soaked foxhole,
Backed by a Cross of Red?

He is the chap who is giving
Ten million times what we give;
And all that he asks is the privilege
To come back home and live.

Give—what's a five dollar greenback
Compared to the value we get,
In knowing that five may mean saving
A boy whose life's blood has been let.

We won't hear a whine from the soldier,
Though he knows that the knock at our door
Was answered with wavering conscience
That we simply can't give any more.

Oh, yes, we can give and keep giving
With far less endeavor than he
Is giving each hour of day and night
In that hell hole across the sea.

Her Letter

Dear Daddy:

Though I've never seen you, Daddy,
I can tell you're some fine chap
From the picture we keep standing
Near that big Italian map.

Mom says you're out there fighting,
And you've just delivered Rome;
Is it true that if we buy the bonds
You'll soon be coming home?

Mom says that you're a soldier,
And it's wrong to question why;
So I don't ask her anymore—
It only makes her cry.

Gee, but I love you, Daddy,
(Don't tell my two Grandpaps)!
I wouldn't make 'em jealous
While you are making maps.

Capt. Heath, I'd like to meet you,
And I'm sure that you'd like me;
Tell the Boss my doll needs fixing
In my sand box o'er the sea.

Your loving daughter,

GEORGEANN

His Letter

Dear Dad:

I guess you don't remember when I came from school that night with tattered coat to tell you that I'd been in a fight. All these years I've nursed your answer: "Did you feel, son, you were right?"

Please tell Mom not to worry as I move up front tonight; that when she washed my neck and ears, I thought that it was might, but I love you both for teaching me about what's might and right.

Your grateful son,

G. I. Joe

An Obituary

Under the shade of any tree, the village gossip sits,
His hands, though large enough for work, are simply flabby mitts,
He owes most everyone he meets, yet sits, and sits, and sits.
He goes occasionally to church and when he tells the boys,
The preacher was a washup bent on killing human joys,
They listen good, which makes his heart rejoice.
Eating, sleeping, borrowing, downward through life he goes,
Each morning sees the lawn uncut, each evening mother mows,
While he hoists one at a nearby inn to gain a night's repose.

The \$64 Question

Will there be gold in your pocket
When there's silver in your hair;
Will that old sweetheart be cared for
When you climb the Golden Stair?

Will it bring peace to the mansion
You have builded in the skies,
To watch your loved ones battle
For things the world denies?

Will they love the family album
With its pictures of their Dad;
Can they turn its pages conscious
That he gave the best he had?

Will you heed that boy who's calling
From the hell across the pond?
Then buckle up your belt a bit
And buy another bond!

In Re: Politics

Let's seal our lips while open minds
Shall wait for time to place
A value on dead Jean Darlan,
Dear Lord, please grant us grace.

Let's mindful be Your Son was judged
By hasty acts of men;
That even we might possibly
Mis-judge things now and then.

Let's grateful be for lives he saved—
Perhaps your boy and mine;
If he helped through Red White and Blue,
Lord, mark his tomb a shrine.

Friends

Books have been written on Friendship,
Lives have been given to show
The depth of human affection
One soul for another may know;
Friends at your side will stand ready
To grieve with you over your dead,
And do what they can to lighten your load
By saying just what should be said.

They are genuine friends, but let me acclaim
That friend who arrives at your door,
When the castle you thought firmly builded
Goes crumbling down to the floor;
Destroying the dreams you have nurtured,
Clouding your place in the sun,
While out of the dark all you needed
Was a hand, and the battle was won.

Gracious God, may I ask You to favor and bless
That friend who has seen your heart bleed,
Then whispers so softly you scarce know he's near:
"Keep fighting. How much do you need?"

What's the Use

She stood on the stairs near dawn of day,
When through the door ten feet away,
There reeled again the self same jay
Who promised her he'd reform some day.

In deepest, guttural tones she said:
"I am the devil, and you are dead,
So come with me where my fires red
Will roast you for the life you've led."

"Okay," said he, "the day seems raw,
Let's have a drink and yell hurrah
For me and my new brother-in-law—
I married your sister. How's Ma and Pa."

Kick in

Hitler planned long ago he could whip us,
He weighed well the weakness of France;
He sneered at the tea drinking British,
And the Yanks who go on with the dance.

He knew he faced toughness in Russia,
But planned that by crushing them first,
He could wring the necks of all others
Who dared to question his thirst.

We've seen what became of Benito
Whose wagon was hitched to his star;
And Tojo whose dream of a rising sun
Finds the clutch in reverse on his car.

But let us remember the fly on the wheel,
Who spoke in his own self praise,
As he rode on the winning chariot:
"Gee, what a dust I do raise!"

The boy up front is raising the dust,
And taking the rap on his chin;
If ever he needed our help, it's now,
When the Bond Drive calls—kick in.

Vot's Dot?

"Ach, Himmel," he said at the Pearly Gate,
"You mean dot I must stand and wait,
Till you turn pages of books galore?
No one has dared do dot before."
The keeper said, with lack of mirth,
"You're listed here as a curse on Earth;
Don't think that you can chisel in
Like you did down there in old Berlin;
They need a paper hanger in hell,"
So he paged a bouncer and all went well.

Acknowledging Receipt

Dear Son:

Express just brought the package of clothes that you won't need;
Mom wants to cry, but somehow I can only wish you speed;
Perhaps it's pride makes me decide a smile outdoes a tear,
E'en though I know that down below I'm wishing you were here.
Of course I'll cry a little just to please your lovely Ma,
But honest, Joe, these G. I. shoes will bring me back my taw;
I chuckle that I have a son who helped teach Jerry how to run,
And these old shoes you sent to me will keep alive the memory;
Besides, your Dad in all truth states the ones he had were not full
mates,
And those you had will fit your Dad—you understand me don't
you lad?

Your loving Dad

To Captain Mary Brown

Dear Daughter:—

There's an ancient myth a diamond
Alongside of its rival, cut glass,
Might now and then fool a layman
And each for the other might pass;
But, placed under water, the diamond
Shines forth with a lustre sublime,
While the other, like German imposters,
Fades out when dipped in the Rhine.

The moral behind this preachment
Is the pardonable pride of a Dad,
Writing tonight to his daughter—
The best that a Dad ever had;
Acknowledging news you're a Captain,
Saluting you proudly, Lass,
For proving when placed under water,
Your fibre is diamond—not glass.

Your loving Dad

Her Version

A. W. O. and L. sounds like a New Deal term;
But this is one the army coined concerning the return
Of a soldier leaving barracks, who may have had a pass,
But lacked a watch, a calendar, or broke his hour glass.

She says she understands all that, and discipline is fine,
Provided it does not include 'that old sweetheart of mine';
She sees no value in a rule that will not work both ways,
So she plans to send the Solons her plan one of these days.

She thinks the Congress properly should pass a law to say
That it shall be unlawful to take her pal away;
She dreams with pride of honor bars arising 'bove his sleeve
But in broken sleep she murmurs: "He is absent without leave."

Isolation

A lone scrub tree on a barren ridge,
Living his life alone,
Goes down at last in the blizzard's track,
Unwept, unsung, unknown.
Spurning the chance of contact
In a forest where all trees thrive,
He reckoned not the unwritten law
That all must unite to survive.
Perhaps this simple truth, tree told,
Should guide the Ship of State
Away from Isolation Point
If she don't want her ribs to grate
On gnarled and twisted souls of men,
Whose purpose in life is stilled
When aims they gave their life to,
Go on each year unfilled.
May trusted hands who hold our fate,
Perfect a nation's plan
That will help us work together
For a Brotherhood of Man.

Just a Newsboy

He was only a newsboy who shouted
His wares to the crowds with a grin,
Or maybe his job was delivering
Out where the crowds grow thin.

No matter where he delivered;
East, West, North, South, up, down;
An American soldier is making the news
He sold in the old home town.

He was there at the Anzio beachhead;
In France he just opened a tome;
The kid who delivered our paper,
Just finished delivering Rome.

Two Flags

Two thousand years with all its tears,
Two arms upon a cross,
Have shedded light to guide mankind
In every bitter loss.

Two flags upon a table,
Two soldiers hand in hand,
Are clinging to His teachings
As they fight in every land.

Two nations with a single tongue
And steadfast Christian hope,
Are backing sons who hold the torch
From Calvary's rugged slope.

Two neighbors and three thousand miles
Of unmanned border line,
Seems to hold the hope—world chanted—
We rehearse at Christmas time.

Ben Voyage

I sat beside some soldiers in a Market Street cafe;
I saw their clean cut faces; I heard what they had to say;
I thought about my own boy serving somewhere in the ranks,
And then - - I ventured over, just to offer them my thanks.

My thanks, and hopes that my own boy may find upon his way
Such pals who bring distinction to the grand old U. S. A.;
I listened to their Mascot, whose tales need no re-touch;
And then - - I reeled them poetry (or stuff I label such).

They listened so intently that I made a solemn vow
I'd send to Fort McDowell where they are stationed now,
A rhyme to mark our meeting and a friendly word of cheer
To the boys who do the fighting for all that we hold dear.

Good luck; And may Ki's sweetheart away back there at home,
Be proud to follow him with prayer wherever he may roam;
He's a bonnie lad, my lassie, and he thinks a heap o' you,
So you just keep on writin' and promise you'll prove true.

The New Test

Will you love me when they've cut out all my coupons,
And we're coasting down the highway on a rim;
Then smile at him who passes with a C card,
Hoping he will bump us home or tow us in?

Will you love me when I can't bring home the bacon,
While fear of rules forbid I call you sweet;
And I'm nursing only memory of the 'phone call:
"Hello, honey, don't forget to bring the meat?"

Will you love me 'cross a humble breakfast table
Knowing fuel shortage means all rooms are cold,
And that letter you saw post marked from the Draft Board
Was to tell me they consider me too old?

Will you love me, pal, in winter as in summer,
Forgetful of these petty things each day,
And be grateful for the chance we have of backing
The gallant men who fight for U. S. A.?

The Rommel Roundup

The cowboy Yank who drove a tank from Africa to Rome,
Told a service station helper: "Looks like Jerry's headin' home;
I'll make a trip around the block to look for any stray,
If you see one while I am gone, I wish you'd mark the way
The lousy critter drifted, and I'll round the maverick up
With this mustang I am ridin' which can outdo any Krupp.
You might tell him if he pauses that I'm loadin' up with gas
Which, speakin' plain means he best move right on through Bren-
ner Pass.

When the Rommel roundup's over, I'll drift back to see your town
'Cause I note some things needs doin' 'fore this old cat idles down;
I was thinkin' as I motored past the Coliseum there
What a corkin' place that could be made to hold a county fair;
With this old cat in two days flat I'd make 'em field and track,
So you find out just who's in charge and tell 'em I'll be back.

In Re: Planning

When we look back at the record, as Al Smith used to say,
It reveals a raft of proffered plans and help to lead the way;
Among them fearless Teddy (who had our love and vote)
Felt his hundred thousand riders could get the Kaiser's goat.
Then Henry Ford outfitted his famous peace ship plan
To rid the trench by Christmas of every soldier man.
We found that all such planings were sincere but idle dreams
So we called upon the fliers, soldiers, sailors, and marines;
Like the man who wanted buried beside his ancient car,
For the reason it had pulled him out of every hole so far,
We turn now to the gallant men in air, on sea, or land,
Knowing they will pull us through again, if we give them a hand.

Adios

Dear Son:

"So long, I'll see you later,"
Were parting words that night,
As giant engines puffed to pull
Your troop train out of sight.

"So long, I'll see you later,"
Echoed down the pulsing rail
To mother, wife or sweetheart
Waving faith you could not fail.

"So long, I'll see you later,"
Was a challenge to your Dad;
He accepts and pledges in return
To fight behind you, lad.

"So long, I'll see you later,"
Was God's parting with His son;
So if this be Armageddon,
Count me with you 'till it's won.

Dad's Footsteps

Dear Dad:

Resting a bit in a wooded glen,
Scarred from the last world war,
It seems strange, Dad, that names ahead
Mark goals which you fought for.
We'll take the towns just like you did,
But I ponder here tonight
The irony which calls a son
To follow Dad's lost fight;
I remember well your letters
When you were fighting here,
And I never, never can forget
How Mom choked back a tear;
I was just a kid in those days,
But memory is plain
Of your high hope that sacrifice
Would help ban war again;
Yet here I am in your old tracks,
(I'm sure they are the same),
Indeed, I saw scratched on a tree
Your company, and name.
So long, Dad—it's "lights out" now,
At daybreak we move up,
Please tell the workers on your shift
There are no strikes at Krupp;
You made the grade, and came back home
To nurse a promised peace;
I'll do my best to fill your shoes,
Let's pray, Dad, all wars cease.

Your son and pal,

G. I. Joe

Reveries

I wonder as I wander
Down the streets of U. S. A.
If passing crowds are mindful
Of a soldier far away;
Do they realize that all we've won
Would overnight be lost,
Except for noble sacrifice
Of those whom fate has tossed
Against the mouth of cannon,
And the treachery of men:
Are they buying bonds to haste the day
When he'll come home again;
Or is their aim inspired
By pursuit of power and pelf;
Are they conscious debt lies deeper
That to one's own dear self?
I overhear the answer,
In a crowded trolley car:
"I am working in a factory,
And I've three sons in the war."

Mother

Somebody made the sacrifice
Of youth for maternity;
Somebody brinked the Valley of Death
That future man might be.

Somebody saw a fine son march
In a column that's history;
Somebody mended a broken heart
When the list read, casualty.

Somebody knows of freedom's price,
All paid for by the code;
Somebody smiles at boastful men
Who fancy they carry the load.

Somebody grieves a war-mad man
Could launch a lust to kill;
Somebody knows he blasted a gap
He has no power to fill.

Somebody daily carries on,
With a love no man may ken;
Somebody knows: "Thou shalt not kill,"
Is strongest of the TEN.

Somebody whispers: "Mother,"
Facing the wrath out there;
Everyone asks that God caress
The silver in her hair.

The Absentee

St. Peter was guarding the Pearly Gate
One night when a traveler pulled in late;
St. Peter said: "Will you please state
What right you have to make us wait?"

"Sure thing," he said, "I'll tell you, Pete
I blew in a beer joint down the street,
And met some guys with dough to treat,
So we outlined plans for 'Dolph's defeat.'"

St. Peter said: "The records show
That you've been absent days in a row";
The visitor answered: "Yes, I know,
I stayed at home to shovel snow."

The Guardian said, with lack of mirth:
"You might get by with that stuff on Earth,
But not up here where we measure worth
By service done. Bud, here's your berth:

"Coast on back down and join the fight
Your soldier brother wages tonight
In a mud filled trench, his belt drawn tight;
Go back, I say and learn what's right.

"The miner you left alone in the drift
Manning a buzzie, noisy and swift,
Depended on you to give him a lift—
A soldier is needing lead from your shift."

The Task Ahead

When Earth's great battle has ended
And casualty lists have been told;
When the final soldier is mustered out,
And rifle and cannon are cold;
We will pause, with only a backward glance,
At trials we've just passed through,
Counting our grief, as we seek God's aid,
In building the world anew.

It is then we will live as He planned it,
And none shall be given to claim
The right to murder a neighbor
While mumbling His Holy name;
It is then that shell-torn battlefields,
Enshrined by men through pain,
Will become a world wide Rosary,
Symbols of loss and—gain.

It is then that shades of gallant men
Who fought to keep us free,
Will join with the Calvary sacrifice,
In a message to you and me,
To go on with a task they sponsored,
Which contemplates a Plan
That will justify the price they paid
For a Brotherhood of Man.

